

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EB-08 OES-07 ACDA-12 IO-14 CIAE-00
DODE-00 PM-05 H-02 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05
PA-02 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-20 AGRE-00 HEW-06 CEQ-01
EPAE-00 NSF-02 OMB-01 TRSE-00 HA-05 AID-05 DLOS-09
/149 W

-----069231 271322Z /41

R 262011Z APR 78

FM AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6328

USDOC WASHDC

INFO AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

AMEMBASSY BRASILIA

AMCONSUL PORTO ALEGRE

UNCLAS SECTION 1 OF 2 MONTEVIDEO 1391

USDOC PLEASE PASS TO: NOAA

E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: TBIO, TOCY, UY

SUBJ: UNKNOWN OFFSHORE POISONOUS GAS IN SOUTHERN BRAZIL AND

URUGUAY: OFFICIAL GOU ANALYSIS

REF: MONTEVIDEO 1345

1. SUMMARY: THE GOU, IN AN APRIL 24 COMMUNIQUE, DECLARED THAT THE RECENT OFFSHORE CONTAMINATION AFFECTING THE URUGUAYAN-BRAZILIAN COASTLINE WAS CAUSED BY STRONG SOUTHERLY WINDS AND ACCOMPANYING DRAINING OF FRESH-WATER LITTORAL LAGOONS IN LATE MARCH. PRESS HERE REPORTS INTERNAL DIS-AGREEMENT IN BRAZIL OVER THE EXACT CAUSE OF THE PHENOMENON: WHEREAS THE GOB STILL ADHERES TO THE "RED TIDE" THEORY, INDEPENDENT BRAZILIAN SCIENTISTS BELIEVE THE CONTAMINATION WAS CAUSED BY TOXIC CHEMICAL SUBSTANCES. THE TEXT OF THE APRIL 24 GOU COMMUNIQUE IS INCLUDED BELOW. END SUMMARY.
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2. A POINT COMMUNIQUE ISSUED ON APRIL 24 BY THE URUGUAYAN NATIONAL FISHING INSTITUTE AND THE OCEANO-GRAPHIC, HYDROGRAPHIC AND METEOROLOGICAL SERVICE OF THE URUGUAYAN NAVY STATES THAT THE RECENT OFFSHORE CONTAMINATION AFFECTING THE BRAZILIAN AND URUGUAYAN COASTLINES WAS CAUSED BY THE UNUSUALLY STRONG SOUTHERLY

WINDS AND ACCOMPANYING HIGH TIDES OF LATE MARCH. THE REPORT, SUBSCRIBED TO BY BOTH THE GOU AND THE URUGUAYAN-ARGENTINE JOINT MARITIME COMMISSION, STATES THAT DUE TO SUCH TIDAL FACTORS LARGE QUANTITIES OF SEA MOLLUSKS ARE COMMONLY DESTROYED AND FRESH-WATER LITTORAL LAGOONS DRAINED, THUS KILLING FISH DUE TO ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE.

3. THE COMMUNIQUE ADAMANTLY DISCOUNTS THE "RED TIDE" THEORY OF THE BRAZILIAN MIINISTRY OF HEALTH, STATING THAT REPEATED SEA WATER AND SEA LIFE ANALYSES DO NOT REVEAL SUFFICIENT QUANTITIES OF DINOFLAGELLAE NECESSARY TO CAUSE SUCH A PHENOMENON. CHEMICAL CONTAMINANTS, SUCH AS MERCURY, ARSENIC, LEAD AND PESTICIDES ARE ALSO RULED OUT, AS THE GOU ANALYSIS DOES NOT REVEAL SUFFICIENT PROPORTIONS OF ANY OF THESE TOXIC SUBSTANCES NECESSARY TO AFFECT SEA LIFE OR HUMANS. THE REPORT CONCLUDES BY STATING THAT THE PHYSICAL/CHEMICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE COASTAL WATERS (OXYGEN LEVEL, SALINITY, TEMPERATURE, PH BALANCE, ETC.) PRESENTLY REVEAL NO ABNORMALITIES.

4. LOCAL PRESS OF APRIL 24 REPORTS DISAGREEMENT BETWEEN THE OFFICIAL GOB AND INDEPENDENT BRAZILIAN SCIENTIFIC FINDINGS. ACCORDING TO PRESS THE GOB AND BRAZILIAN MINISTER OF PUBLIC HEALTH, PAULO DE ALMEIDA MACHADO, ASSERT THAT THE PHENOMENON WAS CAUSED BY THE "RED TIDE" (THE ACCELERATED REPRODUCTION OF MICRO-UNCLASSIFIED

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ORGANIC DINOFLAGELLAE) WHICH HAD PREVIOUSLY OCCURRED IN THE AREA IN 1943 AND 1963. HOWEVER, SEVERAL INDEPENDENT BRAZILIAN SCIENTISTS REPORTEDLY BELIEVE THAT THE CONTAMINATION WAS CAUSED BY TOXIC CHEMICALS; I.E. MERCURY AND/OR AGRICULTURAL PESTICIDES WHICH, AS REPORTED IN REFTTEL, ARE PRESENT IN LARGE QUANTITIES IN THE AFFECTED AREA.

5. THE FOLLOWING IS THE TEXT OF THE GOU COMMUNIQUE ISSUED ON APRIL 24, AS REPRINTED BY THE LOCAL PRESS: QUOTE: A JOINT REPORT RECENTLY ISSUED BY THE NATIONAL FISHING INSTITUTE (INAPE) AND THE OCEANOGRAPHIC, HYDROGRAPHIC AND METEOROLOGICAL SERVICE OF THE NAVY (SOHMA), ON THE ECOLOGICAL PHENOMENON, ASSERTS THAT THE CAUSE OF THE DEATHS OF CLAMS AND SNAILS WAS DUE TO THE "HIGH FLOOD TIDES WHICH NORMALLY PRODUCE THESE EFFECTS." THE PRESENCE OF A HIGH INCIDENCE OF MORTALITY OF MOLLUSKS AND FISH REGISTERED ON THE ATLANTIC COAST OF URUGUAY, HAPPENED AFTER THE END OF MARCH WHEN MAJOR STORMS RAISED THE LEVEL OF THE SEA ENORMOUSLY. THE NATIONAL FISHING INSTITUTE (INAPE) AND THE OCEANOGRAPHIC, BYDROGRAPHIC AND METEOROLOGICAL SERVICE OF THE ARMY (SOHMA) ISSUED PRESS COMMUNIQUE DATED 4/7/78, 4/17/78,

4/18/78 AND 4/20/78. BECAUSE OF NEW LAND AND SEA STUDIES DONE BY THE RESEARCH SHIP "LAMATRA" BOTH ORGANIZATIONS CONSIDERED IT CONVENIENT TO ISSUE THE FOLLOWING CONCLUSIONS: THE LAST INVESTIGATIONS HAVE CONFIRMED, ONCE MORE, THAT THE DEATHS OF CLAMS AND SNAILS IN THE EASTERN ZONE, WAS DUE TO THE HIGH FLOOD TIDES THAT NORMALLY PRODUCE THOSE EFFECTS. THE DEATHS OF FRESH-WATER FISH WERE CAUSED BY THE BREAKING OF THE SAND BARS

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PA-02 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-20 AGRE-00 HEW-06 CEQ-01
EPAE-00 NSF-02 OMB-01 TRSE-00 HA-05 AID-05 DLOS-09
/149 W

-----069255 271326Z /41

R 262011Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6329
USDOC WASHDC
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OF THE LITTORAL LAGOONS (ALSO CAUSED BY THE ABOVE-MENTIONED HIGH FLOOD TIDES), PERMITTING THE ENTRANCE OF SALTY WATER COMING FROM THE SEA AND ITS LATER DRAINING; THIS EFFECT DEPOSITED A QUANTITY OF DEAD FISH OVER THE SHORES OF LAGOONS AND NEAR THE DRAINAGE CHANNELS OF THE SAND BARS. THE NATIONAL FISHING INSTITUTE AND THE OCEANOGRAPHIC, HYDROGRAPHIC AND METEOROLOGICAL SERVICE OF THE NAVY CATEGORICALLY REJECTS THE EXISTENCE IN THIS CASE OF THE SO-CALLED "RED TIDE," DUE TO THE FACT THAT NO ABNORMAL COLORATION WAS REGISTERED IN THE WATERS; ALSO THAT FISH, BIRDS AND MAMMALS CONTINUED TO LIVE IN NORMAL CONDITIONS; THAT MANY INHABITANTS OF THE REGION ATE DEAD FISH BUT FRESH MOLLUSKS AND FISH WITHOUT SHOWING ANY SIGNS OR SYMPTOMS OF POSSIBLE POISONING; AND,

FUNDAMENTALLY, DUE TO THE REPEATED PLANKTON ANALYSIS
DONE BY EXPERTS IN MARINE PLANKTOLOGY, WHICH DID NOT
REVEAL THE PRESENCE OF MICROORGANISMS IN A PROPORTION
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THAT COULD CAUSE THIS PHENOMENON. IT HAS ALSO BEEN
PROVEN THAT THE PHYSICAL-CHEMICAL FACTORS OF THE OCEAN
SUCH AS LEVELS OF OXYGEN, SALTINESS, TEMPERATURE AND PH,
ON THE BASIS OF SEVERAL ANALYSIS MADE ALONG THE COAST
AND BY THE INVESTIGATION SHIP "LAMATRA," DO NOT INDICATE
ABNORMAL CONDITION. IN VIEW OF THE LARGE AMOUNT OF
CONTAMINANTS THAT MAY AFFECT THE MARINE RESOURCES, IT
WAS CONSIDERED CONVENIENT FIRST OF ALL TO CHECK FOR:
MERCURY, ARSENIC, LEAD AND THE WIDE VARIETY OF PESTICIDES,
GIVING SPECIAL EMPHASIS TO THE SMPLING NEAR THE
"TAQUARI" SHIP. NONE OF THE ANALYSIS DONE UP TO THE
MOMENT IN COOPERATION WITH OTHER INSTITUTES, REVEAL THE
EXISTENCE OF THESE CONTAMINANTS IN A PROPORTION THAT
MIGHT HAVE AFFECTED SEA ORGANISMS OR HUMAN BEINGS. HOW-
EVER, DUE TO THE SERIOUSNESS WITH WHICH THIS MATTER
SHOULD BE TREATED, RESEARCH IS BEING CONTINUED.
UNQUOTE.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: WATER POLLUTION, COMMUNIQUE, GASES, POISONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 26 apr 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 jan 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978MONTEV01391
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
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Format: TEL
From: MONTEVIDEO
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
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Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780415/aaaaamik.tel
Line Count: 197
Litigation Code IDs:
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Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: c6bf2fa7-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 MONTEVIDEO 1345
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 29 mar 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: N/A
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2844006
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: UNKNOWN OFFSHORE POISONOUS GAS IN SOUTHERN BRAZIL AND URUGUAY: OFFICIAL GOU ANALYSIS
TAGS: TBIO, TOCY, UY, BR
To: STATE COM
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/c6bf2fa7-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014